

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS™ OAK PARK / RIVER FOREST



**Oak Park District 97 Board of Education
March 23, 2010**

Kathleen Sheehan, Observer

Board Members present: Barber, Clauser, Gates, Reddy, Spatz, and Traczyk
Also Present: Superintendent Collins, Secretary Marinier

The majority of this meeting was devoted to the much anticipated presentation and discussion of the financial details of the District 97 Technology plan, led by Assistant Superintendent Kevin Anderson.

Technology Plan Review: Employing 21st Century Learning

Part II.

Assistant Superintendent Anderson began by recapping one of the major points from the Part I presentation: District 97 is not seeking to merely engage in augmentation and substitution regarding its tech resources. Rather, the district's plans are to modify and redefine its technological capabilities. With this in mind, 245 teachers took the LoTi survey (Levels of Teaching Innovation) and the results, which highlight the current instructional practices and levels of teaching innovation, will be used to design staff development. In general, teachers seemed to think that the greatest obstacles in the way of using technology is the limited or lack of access to technology, along with a lack of time in the day, insufficient computers, outdated computers, and network slowness.

According to the tech plan, the operational budget for the first year (this includes maintenance and annual costs) is \$28,562. The instructional costs will be significantly higher and different based upon the selection of either Apple or Dell. With Apple, the grand total will be \$1,101,209 and with Dell it will be \$808,333. As a part of this budget, the plan calls for the introduction of 3 Tech Integration Specialist, one in the first year, and two more after that.

This new and detailed information led to more questions from the board. Member Gates was the first to respond to the numbers, stating that it should be possible to cut costs associated with training, especially with regard to the middle schools, where there is team time. Member Spatz felt that the tech endeavor is understaffed, but Member Gates pointed out that the district needs to prioritize before adding staff. Member Clauser questioned how the tech plan will fit in with a referendum and financial projections. Although he agrees that professional development is the key to success, he asked for "bite size chunks" that the district could take with a 5 year projection in mind. Anderson responded that year 1 of the plan is essential for a number of reasons, primarily that the current Macs are 8 years old and will not last much longer.

Member Barber feels that implementing the tech plan is something that the district needs to do, but how to do it is the challenging question, particularly in light of the financial situation. To put this in perspective, Member Spatz pointed out that year 1 of the tech plan is 2% of the teaching budget and that there is no point in looking at years 2 through 5 if they are not committed to year 1. It's likely that

the district will lose \$5 million from the state this year, according to Board President Traczyk. The district cannot support going forward on an expenditure path and then lay off teachers.

There seemed to be consensus that this was putting Assistant Superintendent Anderson “between a rock and a hard place” in that he was asked to come before the board with this plan before the board had any clarity on finances for the next year. However, the decision will impact instruction for the next 3-4 years. The board seemed to agree that there would be no point in embarking on staff development without the new machines. Member Spatz pointed out that the District has to invest in professional development for staff, just as it has to pay staff. The trade-off is that the district may have to have fewer staff, but better to have fewer staff with all the tools they need. Member Spatz also suggested they reevaluate the student portion of the plan, even though the reality is that the student portion is a smaller dollar portion of the plan.

Some final thoughts included Member Gates asking what the community’s priorities would be and Member Barber saying that the district will just have to find other ways to pay for the tech plan since it is so critical to the foundation of 21st Century teaching. He suggested cutting other things like other professional development and seeing what PTO’s can do. Lastly, the board members all responded to the suggestion of asking for a “tech fee.” Member Reddy was the only one who was undecided, all other members were against the idea, with Member Spatz specifying that he was against it for year 1, but perhaps would consider it when students were given laptops in subsequent years.

Although he expressed concern that it would be too late, Board President Traczyk said that voting on this plan will have to wait until the April 13th meeting. Assistant Superintendent Anderson responded that it would not be too late to place necessary orders if they waited until the April 13th meeting.

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